

team, for professional sports, and, indeed, for the entire country. Jackie Robinson was one of those rare individuals who transcended both race and athletics to become an American hero. It is my hope and belief that his legacy today is as powerful as ever.●

#### JACKIE ROBINSON

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, some of the most pivotal events in U.S. history that have helped eliminate the barriers between white and black Americans have been simple acts that occurred in very common, everyday settings; on a bus, in a diner, and in a school. Today marks the 50th anniversary of one of those events, and it also occurred in a common and unlikely setting—at a baseball game. On April 15, 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers debuted their new infielder, Jackie Robinson, in a game against the Boston Braves. And by his very presence on that field, American society was changed forever.

Until that day, professional baseball had been segregated for over 50 years, and no African-American in the 20th century had worn a major league uniform. Segregation had denied many fine black players from competing side by side with their white counterparts. It was the dream of many Negro League stars like Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, and Cool Papa Bell to take the field in a major league park and have the chance to claim their rightful place in the record books alongside Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb. They knew they were good enough, and so did many white baseball executives who saw them play. But until Jackie Robinson, black Americans were kept out of the majors and many of these great players never got the chance to play there.

In 1947, Dodgers' manager Branch Rickey ignored the color line and gave Jackie Robinson a chance to play. Not because he was black, not because he could be a symbol for a change in American society, but because he was a dazzling player who could help the Dodgers win. And he did. In that very first year, Robinson became the National League's Rookie of the Year. In 1949, he would be named the Most Valuable Player. In 10 years, he helped Brooklyn capture six National League championships and one World Series title. He retired with a lifetime batting average of .311 and was named to the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.

After his rookie season, he was listed second only to Bing Crosby as the most popular man in America. That is a very interesting fact, for even though he clearly captured the hearts and minds of many Americans, and no doubt changed the thinking of many others, there were also those who hated him and let him know it with vicious insults, jeers, and threats of physical violence. On the field opposing ballplayers tried to spike him on the base paths, and pitchers regularly threw fast balls near his head. Even some of his own

teammates asked to be traded when they learned he was being called up from the minors. Off the field he sometimes could not join the rest of the Dodgers in the same hotels or restaurants. Jackie Robinson had to endure it all, because he knew if he fought back, if his confidence and calm were rattled, and if he did not perform to the highest athletic level, it could be years before another minority player would be given the same chance. But he used his courage and ability to succeed on every level, proving himself to be much, much more than just a talented baseball player.

How far we have come in terms of racial equality in the half-century since Jackie Robinson's debut is debatable. Black athletes are now commonplace in professional sports, and some, such as basketball star Michael Jordan, are among the most successful and instantly recognizable figures in the world. Over the weekend, an amazingly-gifted and congenial young man named Tiger Woods became both the first African-American and first Asian-American to win the Masters golf tournament, breaking down another long-held color barrier.

But outside of sports, there are still subtle but daunting barriers that prevent African-Americans, as well as other minorities, from achieving equal status in many facets of our culture. Shortly before his death in 1972, Robinson himself was quoted as saying,

I can't believe that I have it made while so many of my black brothers and sisters are hungry, inadequately housed, insufficiently clothed, denied their dignity, live in slums or barely exist on welfare.

If he were still alive today, it is likely his opinion would be unchanged.

But America is a work in progress and there may always be barriers, large and small, which create inequity in our society. Jackie Robinson was one of the best athletes in the world, and the barrier he broke was one that prevented him and other black athletes from using their talents for their fullest gain. Jackie Robinson faced that barrier with courage, faith, and dignity. He broke it for himself, but even more significantly for all those who have followed. That is why he is a hero and why we celebrate his memory today. Perhaps the lesson we can learn from Jackie Robinson's example is that we must face those areas of discrimination we encounter in our lives, no matter what our racial heritage, with the same courage, faith, and dignity. We may never fully end discrimination but we can continue working together to eliminate the barriers that remain.●

#### JACKIE ROBINSON

● Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, today, all of America celebrates the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's courageous entry into major league baseball, an event which foreshadowed and indeed paved the way for the wider integration of American society in the

1950's and 1960's. For the people of Georgia, this celebration has special significance because Jackie Robinson was born in Cairo, GA, 78 years ago. Last year, his Georgia roots were honored when the Cairo High School named its baseball stadium Jackie Robinson Field.

The son of a sharecropper and grandson of a slave, Jackie Robinson knew poverty, adversity, and the most overt forms of discrimination. He knew especially the lonely burden of having to break the color line in baseball all by himself. Apart from remarkable athletic abilities, Jackie Robinson possessed extraordinary personal qualities which enabled him to embody the hopes and challenge the prejudices of an entire generation of Americans. He truly met the classic definition of courage—the demonstration of grace under pressure.

Georgians and all Americans honor the history which Jackie Robinson made 50 years ago today. It is clear in retrospect that he did more than open the door of the national pastime to African-Americans. He also helped to open the door of a genuine opportunity society to all Americans. Jackie Robinson believed passionately in the promise of the American dream. Through a lifetime of hard work, personal sacrifice, and commitment to racial harmony, he did as much as any American over the past half century to help make that noble dream a reality.●

#### RECOGNIZING THE FRONT LINE IRS EMPLOYEE

● Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, as we debate our tax system and the management of the Internal Revenue Service, I believe we should take time out to recognize a largely unappreciated group of public servants. If there is anyone dreading tax day more than the taxpayer in general, it is the front line IRS employee who is right now trying to handle all of those last minute phone calls and process the bulk of returns that are just now starting to flood in. These people are not the problem, they are the ones who make the system as it exists work in the best way possible. The revenues they collect pay for our national parks, our highways, and our national defense. While we can debate the system at length, I believe we should take a moment today of all days to recognize the hard work done by those front line men and women at the IRS to make our government run.●

#### TRIBUTE TO THE TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESSES IN KANSAS CITY

● Mr. BOND. Mr. President, on Monday, April 21, 1997, the Kansas City MO Chamber of Commerce will honor the 1997 Top 10 Small Businesses of the Greater Kansas City area. The Chamber is an association of almost 3,000 businesses across the 10-county bistate area whose members employ approximately 240,000 people in the Greater